

VZCZCXYZ0035
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHKI #1066 1861008
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 051008Z JUL 06
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4292
INFO RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 2912
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1113
RUEHL/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0154
RUEHLC/AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE 2640
RUEHLGB/AMEMBASSY KIGALI 4760
RUEHJB/AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA 4052

UNCLAS KINSHASA 001066

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/PDPA, AF/C, IIP/G/AF
SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL ECPS SCUL CG BE KPAO

SUBJECT: BELGIAN INTERNATIONAL RADIO COMES TO KINSHASA

Sensitive but Unclassified. Not for Internet Distribution.

¶1. (U) Summary: Belgian international FM radio now broadcasts to the world's second French-language city, Kinshasa. It competes with RFI, BBC, VOA and Africa No.1. Its success will likely depend upon its getting a reporter on the ground in the DRC. End Summary

¶2. (U) On June 26, Belgian International Radio (RTBFi) began FM French-language broadcasts to Kinshasa, 24 hours a day. The occasion was marked by a direct broadcast at dawn from the Wallonie-Brussels Cultural Center in Kinshasa, hosted by the Delegate to the DRC for the Belgian French-language Community, Fredy Jacquet. Present at the Center were the Community Minister for International Relations, Marie Dominique Simonet, and Jean-Paul Philippot, the head of RTBF. Also at the microphone were GDRC Information Minister Henry Mova Sakanyi, the head of DRC state television and radio, Emmanuel Kipolongo, and President Modeste Muttinga of the High Media Authority. The studio audience asked questions, as did some listeners in Belgium.

¶3. (U) In discussion since 2004, an agreement was signed in December 2005 to build an FM link in Kinshasa for RTBFi, which has been on short wave here since the late 1990s. The start-up cost to the Region of Wallonie was about 100,000 euros, according to Simonet. RTBFi changed satellites in February 2006 to reach central Africa with the same programming as that heard in Europe. Content includes news, cultural programming, music, sports and, yes, rush-hour and holiday traffic reports from Belgium.

¶4. (U) RTBFi (99.2 FM) joins BBC (92.7 FM), RFI (105 FM and 93.2 FM in neighboring Brazzaville), and Africa No. 1 (102 FM). VOA is selectively rebroadcast by RAGA radio (90.5 FM), and picked up via satellite by a few other Congolese radio stations. RFI is the most listened-to international radio in the capital of this former Belgian colony.

¶5. (U) During the live broadcast on June 26, Congolese Information and Press Minister Mova obliquely referred to the DRC's Belgian colonial past. He playfully trumped the RTBFi announcer, who used French numbering, by repeating the frequency the Belgian way: nonante-neuf point deux. The Belgian delegation made much of the fact that Kinshasa had a population of nearly eight million, and was the second largest French-speaking conglomerate in the world.

¶6. (SBU) Unlike its international competitors, including VOA, RTBFi has no Kinshasa-based reporters or stringers, making Belgian radio essentially a one-way affair. Wallonie Delegate Jacquet told PAO that RTBFi will likely do more to generate reporting from the DRC.

¶7. (SBU) Comment: Fickle Kinshasa, with 30 television channels and

as many FM radio stations (of a total of 196 for all of the DRC), may lose its enthusiasm for newcomer RTBFI if, indeed, more is not done to give voice to the Congolese in its broadcasts. End Comment

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